

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE USE OF ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM
AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF DISTANCE
EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

NORMAH BINTI HJ. HUSSAIN

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the degree of
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Abstract

This study is designed to discover the use of online discussion forum among undergraduates of distance education programme. In the distance learning environment, the online discussion forum is used as a medium for communication. Therefore the aims of this study are to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of using online discussion forum, to provide the suggestions as to improve the weaknesses and finally to investigate the respondents opinions towards the implementation of online discussion forum in schools.

For the purpose of this study two instruments have been designed for data collection. A close ended questionnaire comprised of 30 items and three open ended questionnaire were administered to a group of 58 OUM (Open University Malaysia) Final Year TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) undergraduates. The second instrument used is a focus group interview with three structured questions. A group of 8 undergraduates involved in the group interview. Percentage was used in analyzing the data and the findings were written descriptively.

From the analysis of findings it was found that the undergraduates view positively towards the use of online discussion forum and it has contributed to more strengths than weaknesses. The most strength is mainly on the sharing of information; communicate ideas, learnt from others' point of views and opportunity for contributing ideas. The weaknesses found were the server problems which build the gap between rural and urban participation in the online discussion. A well planned online discussion forum and immediate action is needed to overcome the problems so that everybody particularly undergraduates of distance education will have less problems to communicate anywhere and any place in the country. A positive response towards the implementation of online discussion forum in school has also been positively highlighted.

Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penggunaan Diskusi Forum Dalam Talian di kalangan mahasiswa Program Pendidikan Jarak Jauh. Persekitaran Pembelajaran jarak jauh menggunakan Diskusi Forum dalam Talian sebagai alat perantaraan komunikasi di kalangan mahasiswa. Oleh itu tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyatakan kekuatan dan kelemahan penggunaan Diskusi Dalam Talian dan cadangan untuk menambahbaikkan kelemahannya.

Untuk tujuan kajian ini dua instrumen telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data. Soal selidik yang terdiri daripada 30 pernyataan dan 3 soalan terbuka telah digubal dan diedarkan kepada 58 orang mahasiswa Universiti Terbuka Malaysia Tahun Akhir Bidang TESL. Instrumen yang kedua ialah temuduga kumpulan berfokus dengan berpandukan 3 soalan berstruktur. Sekumpulan 8 orang mahasiswa telah terlibat dalam temuduga ini. Untuk penganalisan data kiraan peratusan telah digunakan dan data di bincang secara deskriptif.

Hasil dari kajian mendapati mahasiswa telah memberi reaksi positif terhadap penggunaan diskusi forum dalam talian dan ia telah menyumbang lebih banyak kekuatan daripada kelemahannya. Dapatan ranking kekuatan tertinggi lebih kepada perkongsian ilmu, meluahkan pendapat, belajar daripada berbagai sudut pandangan dari rakan lain, dan terdapatnya peluang untuk memberi pendapat. Kelemahan yang paling nyata ialah masalah gangguan pelayar talian internet yang menjarakkan penglibatan interaksi responden bandar dan luarbandar. Perhatian serius patut diambil kira untuk menangani masalah tersebut supaya semua berpeluang untuk berinteraksi tak kira di mana di negara ini. Selain itu, cadangan pelaksanaan diskusi forum dalam talian di sekolah mendapat sambutan positif di kalangan responden

Candidate's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work .The topic has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

In the event that my thesis be found to violate the conditions mentioned above, I voluntarily waived the right of conferment of my degree and agree be subjected to the disciplinary rules and regulations of University Teknologi MARA.

Name of Candidate	NORMAH BINTI HJ. HUSSAIN
Candidate's ID No.	2005669430
Programme	MASTER IN EDUCATION (TESL)
Faculty	FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Thesis Title	THE USE OF ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Signature of Candidate

Date

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